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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Gruber, F., Degelsegger, A., & Blasy, C. (2012). Research on South-East Asia in Austria: the project SEA-EU-NET at the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI). *ASEAS - Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 5(2), 369-371. <https://doi.org/10.4232/10.ASEAS-5.2-13>

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Research on South-East Asia in Austria: The Project SEA-EU-NET at the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI)

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Citation Gruber, F., Degelsegger, A., & Blasy, C. (2012). Research on South-East Asia in Austria: The Project SEA-EU-NET at the Centre for Social Innovation (ZSI). *ASEAS - Österreichische Zeitschrift für Südostasienwissenschaften*, 5(2), 369-371.

With the realisation that international cooperation in science and research was essential for the development of an active “European Research Area”², the European Commission launched a series of calls for networking projects between Europe and other world regions. With regard to this effort, the project SEA-EU-NET (www.sea-eu.net) – dedicated to enhancing cooperation between Europe and South-East Asia – started in 2008 with the participation of 22 ministries, funding agencies, academies of science, and research organisations related to *Science, Technology, and Innovation* (STI) from both regions.

The scope of this project is manifold. In the first place, it brings together European and South-East Asian STI stakeholders in cases where consistent interaction had been rather rare previously, especially at a bi-regional level. In this regard, the project – as a positive side effect – facilitates access to South-East Asia, especially for small European countries like Austria or Hungary, which have few traditional ties with the region and limited resources to develop and maintain a separate science policy. By contrast, countries such as the United Kingdom, which are adept in connecting scientists with the region, can contribute their networks and experience to the project. The coordinator of the project, the *International Bureau of the German Ministry for Education and Research*, is particularly active in harnessing the project, as demonstrated by the multitude of funding possibilities for joint research between South-East Asia and Germany, which were newly created on the basis of the SEA-EU-NET project.

1 The authors are social scientists and project managers at the Department for Research Policy and Development, *Centre for Social Innovation* (ZSI), dealing with Science, Technology, and Innovation analysis aspects in projects mainly related to South-East Asia, South Asia, and Austria. Contact: gruber@zsi.at

2 See for example “A Strategic European Framework for International Science and Technology Cooperation. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament” (European Commission 2008; to be updated 2012).

Besides supporting the STI policy dialogue and cooperative activities, the South-East Asian partners in the project also benefit from the information provided with regard to European funding possibilities for scientists. This information is disseminated by Web 2.0 media and the creation of a network of so-called *National Contact Points* (NCPs) in the countries. Additionally, scientific conferences and workshops on thematic areas of interest to both regions, such as vector-borne diseases or energy efficiency, have been organised in order to network and initiate cooperative research projects.

The *Centre for Social Innovation* (ZSI) is the work package leader for analytical support within the project, the third pillar of the project's activities and crucial for both the S&T policy dialogue and networking. ZSI coordinates a team of European and South-East Asian organisations such as the *Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science* (KNAW), the *German Institute of Global and Area Studies* (GIGA) or the *National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Office* (STI) in Thailand.

Until now, the following major analytical activities have been undertaken³:

- a review of national S&T statistics and statistical capacities in South-East Asia
- an analysis of international S&T strategies of the South-East Asian countries
- a mapping of key institutions and high-profile researchers in South-East Asia
- an analysis of existing funding programmes and barriers to cooperation
- a report of global challenges to Europe-South-East Asia cooperation
- a foresight study for STI cooperation between the two regions
- a study on research strengths in South-East Asia and cooperation patterns with the European Union, based on an extensive bibliometric assessment, in cooperation with the United Nations University Institute in Macao.

The regional focus on South-East Asia is rather new for ZSI. Formerly, the Department of Research Policy and Development was mainly engaged in the region of South-East Europe, dealing with science policy analysis and hosting three *Austrian Science Offices* (Ljubljana, Slovenia; Sofia, Bulgaria; and Brno, Czech Republic). Besides the analytical support, ZSI specialises in project management and related services, such as public relations and dissemination work.

³ All results are freely available at www.sea-eu.net or www.zsi.at.

Since the start of SEA-EU-NET, ZSI has further expanded its activities to regions such as South Asia, East Asia, and South America. With the end of SEA-EU-NET in December 2012, a successor project – SEA-EU-NET II – has been funded by the European Commission. With a runtime of four years, ZSI is again the primarily responsible organisation for analytical support.

Selected Publications

Degelsegger, A., & Blasy, C. (Eds.) (2011). *Spotlight on: Science and technology cooperation between Southeast Asia and Europe*. Vienna, Austria: ZSI.

Degelsegger, A., & Gruber, F. (2011). *Co-publication map: SGT cooperation between Europe and India*. New INDIGO Project. Vienna, Austria: ZSI.

Degelsegger, A., Gruber, F., & Wagner, I. (2011). *Towards professionalising 'International SGT Cooperation Foresight': Epistemological and methodological challenges and how to overcome them*. EFP Brief No. 201. Retrieved 28 August, 2012 from http://www.foresight-platform.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/EFP-Brief-No.-201_SEA-EU-Net-Foresight.pdf

Gruber, F., & Degelsegger, A. (Eds.) (2009). *Spotlight on: Excellent researchers from Southeast Asia; Results of a SEA-EU-NET mapping study*. Vienna, Austria: ZSI.

Gruber, F., & Trienes, R. (2010). *Policy recommendations for enhancing science and technology cooperation between the European Union and Southeast Asia*. Retrieved 28 August, 2012 from <https://zsi.at/attach/Dreistetten%20Paper%20-%20final.pdf>

Saeed-Ul Hassan, Haddawy, P., Kuinkel, P., Degelsegger, A., & Blasy, C. (2012). A bibliometric study of research activity in ASEAN related to the EU in FP7 priority areas. *Scientometrics*, 91(3), 1035-1051.

Schüller, M., Gruber, F., Trienes, R., & Shim, D. (2008). *International science and technology cooperation policies of South East Asian countries. Consultation paper prepared for the EU Commission on the occasion of the first bi-regional science & technology policy dialogue, EU-ASEAN, 19-20 November 2008, Paris*. Retrieved August 28, 2012 from <https://zsi.at/attach/ConsultationPaper.pdf>